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**Ambassador Barshefsky Applauds Action on African Growth and Opportunity Act**

“In passing the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the House of Representatives takes a vital step toward promoting further economic growth and reform in Africa” stated United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky. “I am gratified by the significant support for this bill which would increase America’s engagement and exports with Africa, while providing trade incentives and policy tools to help African families move from poverty to prosperity. It is the best opportunity in decades to create the right relationship with the Africa of the future.”

The African Growth and Opportunity Act offers reforming African economies a set of incentives and benefits that will help them grow and enter the world economy. Such benefits include: expanded duty-free trade benefits; market access for textiles; support for African regional integration efforts; increased commitment by the Ex-Im Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corporation to U.S. investors in Africa; significant debt relief; and enhanced trade and investment dialogue.

“I applaud the leadership and sustained efforts of Congressmen Rangel, Crane and McDermott in achieving House passage of AGOA,” continued Ambassador Barshefsky. “This bill is rooted in optimism about Africa and responds to President Clinton’s firm commitment to making stronger economic ties with Sub-Saharan Africa a clear priority of our economic and foreign policy.”